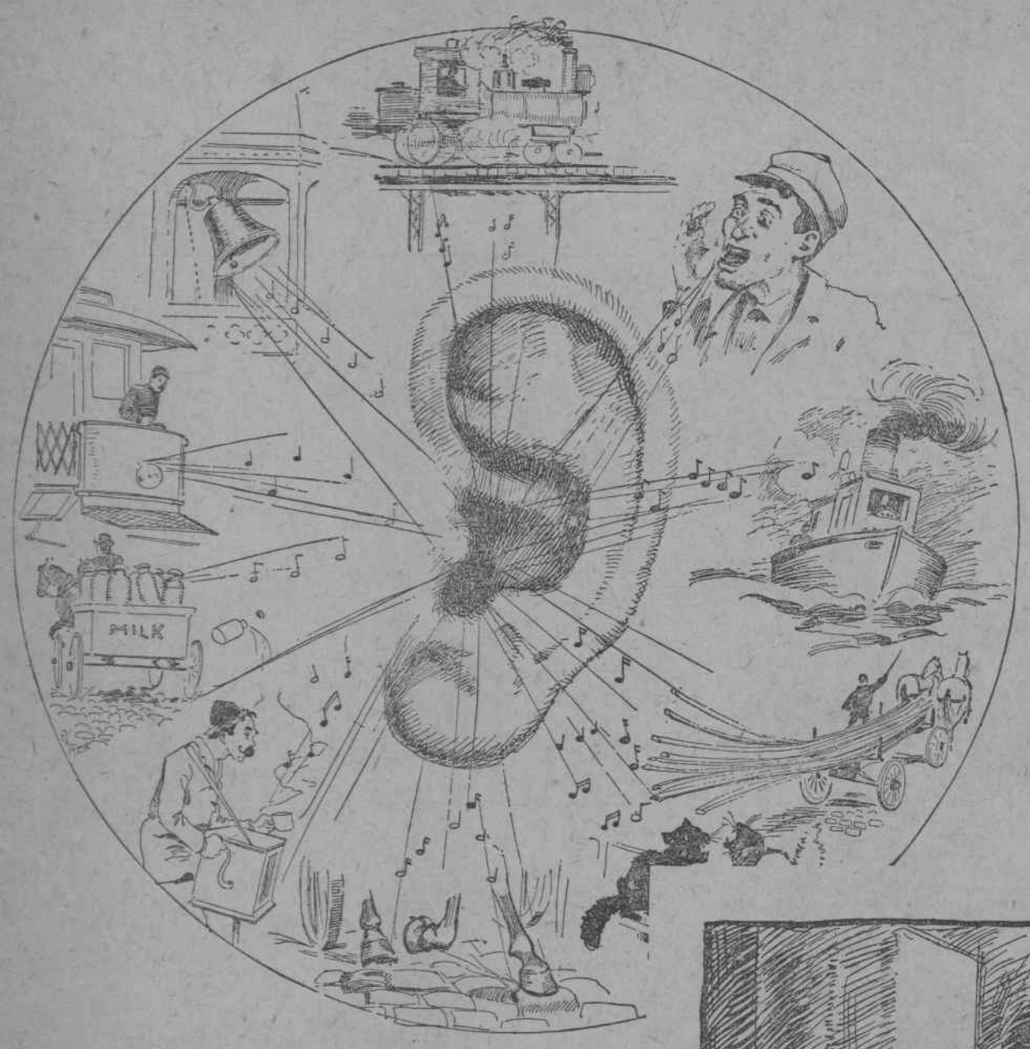

Some familiar and very obnoxious every day noises which are ruining the nerves of New Yorkers.

NOISES AND NERVES.

How the New Anti-Noise Society Proposes to Stop the Din and Racket of New York.

EXCESSIVE noise is a form of violence which injures the hearing, the nervous system and the brain. We do not permit one man to beat another with a stick, to throw injurious substances into his eyes, to poison him or otherwise to maltreat him, but hitherto every man has had full liberty to assault his fellow creatures through the medium of their ears and thereby to do them grievous bodily harm.

But a public movement against unnecessary noises in this city has begun. An ordinance against one most baneful noise has been discovered and a pestiferous noisemaker heavily fined.

Edward Reilly, of No. 327 Mangin street, is ostensibly a truck driver, but his real aim in life has been to make a noise. Last Thursday he was joyfully enthroned on a truck loaded with street car rails. As he rattled through West Third street he made the most nerve-wrecking din it is possible to conceive. Policeman Bambrick stopped him and told him to go back and have the rails wrapped up, as the city ordinance directed.

Mr. Reilly was amused at the idea that he should have any regard for the nerves of others. "Wont you lend me a few comforters?" he said jocularly to Policeman Bambrick.

Whereupon the great and good Bambrick took him to the Mercer street police station. In the morning Magistrate Mott fined Reilly $25, the maximum penalty.

A result of the same state of public feeling is the action brought against the Salvation Army on account of the noises made at the headquarters in Fourteenth street.

The leader and founder of the movement against unnecessary noise is Dr. John H. Girdner, of No. 31 West Forty-fifth street. He opened the fight with a magazine article last September.

"I am now convinced," said Dr. Girdner the other day, "that there is a great public sentiment against the evil of unnecessary noise. When I wrote the article I had long thought about it myself, but I was surprised to find such a hearty agreement with my remarks.

"For nearly six months I have been receiving letters from people, telling me how they have suffered from noise, and thanking me for calling general attention to the plague.

"Most of these people are willing to join a society for the suppression of noise. I have written to them, telling them that I have kept their names and that if such a society is formed they shall be informed.

"I have not had time to do anything toward forming a society, but it should be formed, and I believe it will come. When the thing is done it should be done properly, so that a useful public movement may not be lost. The society should have a charter and responsibilities conferred upon it by the Legislature. Its organization should be modelled somewhat upon that of the Gerry Society. The Society for the Prevention of Noise would be a proper title.

"Magistrate Mott's action is no doubt an indication of aroused public feeling."

Dr. Girdner's article in the North American Review said:

"The deleterious effect of the constant shock or concussion of unpleasant and non-musical sounds on the auditory apparatus is demonstrated beyond question by the fact that nearly all boilermakers, according to the highest authorities on diseases of the ear, are hard of hearing. There is a well-recognized condition of congestion, amounting sometimes to inflammation, in the internal ear, which otologists class under the general name of boilermakers' disease, but this is liable to occur, also, and does occur, in all classes of persons who are exposed, as the inhabitants of the metropolis of New York are, to the continual rattle, roar and screams which assault their ear drums at nearly all hours of the day and night.

"It is, of course, impossible to state what part noise in New York City plays in the death rate and the sick list, but every physician knows it must be considerable. How often the physician in his daily rounds finds it necessary to prescribe "perfect quiet" in order that the flickering spark of life remaining in the patient may be brought back to a healthy flame. Yet in nine cases out of ten that perfect quiet he deems so important cannot be had, owing to the noises from the street. Especially is this true in warm weather when windows must be kept open.

"The best way to study the city noises, it seems to me, is to divide them into groups:

"1. Noises produced by horses and wheeled vehicles.

"2. Noises produced by street pedlers, beggars, street musicians, etc.

"3. Noises produced by bells, whistles, clocks, etc.

"4. Noises produced by animals other than horses, as cats, birds, etc.

"5. All noises which come from the inside of our houses, as persons learning to play musical instruments, training the voice, etc.

"6. Explosives.

"The first group—that is, noises produced by horses and wheeled vehicles—includes street cars, steam cars, elevated cars and all kinds of carriages, whether used for business or pleasure. These are largely necessary noises, but much can be done to lessen their annoying effect. Asphalt pavement on all streets is the one thing needed above all others. It is practically a noiseless pavement, or should be, so far as the carriage itself is concerned; only the clatter of the horses' feet is heard, and that must be put down as unavoidable until we get horseless carriages. Asphalt pavement in New York is, however, far from being noiseless. The old, loose cast-iron manhole cover, which appears at frequent intervals in the otherwise noiseless asphalted street, sends forth a sudden and ear-splitting sound every time a wheel passes over it. I know of no single noise that is so annoying, especially to the sick, as this one. This noise is wholly unnecessary and there is no excuse for its continuance. Manhole covers, which are themselves smoothly asphalted and properly fitted to their frames, make a continuously smooth pavement, and are noiseless. These should take the place of the miserable old rattle-traps now used. This is, of course, the business of the Public Works Department.

"The cartman who drives through a street with the body of the cart banging the shafts at every stride of the horse ought to be stopped by the police and made to fasten the body firmly to the frame.

"A few pieces of old burlap placed between the iron rails when a load of that material is to be drawn through the streets would prevent one of the most brain-bruising assaults we suffer from.

"The second group—noises produced by street pedlers, beggars, street musicians, etc.—are entirely unnecessary. These noisemakers should be treated as public nuisances.

"The third group, according to our arrangement, includes noises produced by bells, whistles, clocks, etc. These are nearly all unnecessary. Church bells and clocks were useful at a time when congregations were scattered and clocks and watches were rare. But none of the conditions exists in New York.

"Every citizen should be required to provide a box where his mail could be deposited and the shrill, ear-splitting, useless postman's whistle should be abolished.

"Noises produced by animals, such as cats, birds, dogs, etc., which constitute our fourth group, are unnecessary. An ordinance requiring all persons who wish to keep a cat to take out a license and keep said cat in the house, and all other cats to be removed to the pound, is all that would be necessary.

"Noises from the inside of our houses comprise the fifth group. If the music teachers could be induced to take their pupils into the country to train their voices and teach them instrumentation, life for many would be all the sweeter. The well-to-do folks set a bad example. At a fashionable reception my lady's drawing room becomes a pandemonium of shouting, screeching women, each doing her best to make herself understood.

"The sixth and last of the groups is explosives. Let us be thankful that this torture is confined mostly to one day in the year, the Fourth of July. The day following our last national holiday I called on a patient, a weak, emaciated, exhausted woman, who had for days been hovering between life and death. She was much worse than the day before, and I wish the City Fathers could have gazed upon her pale, weary, drawn face and heard the pathetic voice as she said: 'I could not get a minute's rest yesterday nor last night, owing to the noise in the street; every explosion seemed to be tearing the nerves from my body.' And this was only one instance out of thousands. These Fourth of July noises in the city are not only unnecessary, but are a gross outrage. If Young America must celebrate this day with explosives, make him get out of the city to do it."

SILVER NELL, THE TRAMP.

She Is a Professional Gambler, but Takes to the Road When Fortune Frowns.

Silver Nell is a female tramp and gambler who is respected by everybody that knows her. She has just reached Butte, Mont., from New York City, having beaten her way on trains or walked the entire distance. Silver Nell has a real past, but it is of that sort which interests rather than attracts. A gambler's daughter, she sees no reason why gambling is not a thoroughly respectable profession. She follows it constantly. When she has money, she spends it like a princess. When her purse is empty she lives as best she can until the wheel of fortune turns her way.

She has visited Butte for the purpose of opening a gambling establishment, and claims that she can there raise the money necessary to carry out her undertaking. It is her passion for gambling that gave her the name of Silver Nell, for she invariably uses silver dollars instead of poker chips when playing poker. If she ever had any name like other people, it has been forgotten, and no one lives who can call her by it. Most of her time for the last ten or fifteen years has been spent in the West, but she has visited the East on several occasions and there is not a member of the sporting fraternity who does not know or has not heard of her.

Contrary to all precedents, Silver Nell, well-filled purse, and always attracting the attention of the sporting fraternity and at the same time commanding its respect. She spent over six years in the pursuit of poker games west of the Mississippi, and then drifted eastward, finally turning up in New York City, after visiting many eastern towns, in many of which she fought the battle of chance at the green table.

Silver Nell, the Railway Tramp.

NO SANDALS.

The British Museum Puts Out a Dress Reformer with Classical Tastes.

The British Museum has just turned out of its library a reader who came into its solemn precincts wearing sandals.

The man had a ticket such as everybody must obtain in order to use this library, and it was not noticed until after he had entered that he was shod in a peculiarly unconventional manner. He wore sandals of a classical pattern, consisting of a flat sole bound to the foot with leather thongs. His modern and inartistic British feet were fully exposed to the public view.

He was a respectable and educated person. The officials of the library took counsel together, and informed him politely that he would have to leave, and would be admitted only in leather shoes completely covering his feet. The sandals they considered a menace to public order in the library. The readers, who are supposed to be engaged exclusively in research and literary work, would neglect their solemn tasks in order to gambol about the man in sandals. After a spirited protest he left.

Hearing of this incident, Mr. Edward Carpenter, a scholar and a gentleman, has announced his intention of proceeding to the library wearing sandals. He invites all citizens who care for personal liberty to accompany him, shod like himself, or at least otherwise than in the ordinary manner. He does not know why any man should not make use of the British Museum and its library wearing the chlamys, the chiton, or the toga.

BEAT A TRAIN ON HER BIKE.

A Cultured Boston Maid's Mad Midnight Race Against an Express.

A midnight race between a young lady cyclist in full evening costume and an express train is the latest bicycle sensation. Add to this that the young lady was beautiful and that the race was made over a moonlit half mile of level highway and you have a spectacle that is certainly unique.

All St. Augustine is talking about it. No such escapade was ever heard of before!

It was for a wager, and the young lady won. This is how it all happened:

Miss Ella Hammond, of Boston, was one of a party that went to Florida last Fall to escape the Northern Winter. She is an enthusiastic cyclist and took her wheel with her.

The other young ladies of the party did likewise, and there was promise of much enjoyment for the girls along the flowery paths of warm St. Augustine.

Miss Hammond's father is a banker of Boston, and in society's most exclusive set she is well known. It did not take long for her to become a leader in the social entertainments of St. Augustine. But she craved something more exciting. The daily spin along the highways became tame to her, so she inaugurated a series of weekly races with the girls. But this also grew tiresome.

Then she struck upon an idea of putting wheel to a novel use. She proposed to the girls to don her evening dress, and, on the first moonlight night, race against the express, which ran parallel to the main road for a distance of half a mile. Further than this, she agreed to wager a new bike that she would beat the train.

Her offer was promptly accepted. An agreement was made to keep the matter perfectly quiet, and time tables were sent for. The girls studied the schedule of the railroad and found that the train was due to strike the open stretch at 11:50 at night. A calendar was then consulted and a night was selected when the moon would be full at that hour.

Bearings were oiled, the bike's adjustments were looked after and on the appointed night they quietly slid into Miss Hammond's room, where she got into her reception gown.

Much giggling and whispering were done at Miss Hammond's expense, but she stuck firm and got in readiness for the wild midnight race.

The party secretly slipped out of the hotel and in the darkness made their way to the highways. All was as silent as the grave. The palm-fringed roads were deserted and even the frogs had ceased their croaking. The only sound that broke the stillness of the night was the twiterings of the girls as they tiptoed along to the appointed spot.

At last they reached it and sat by the roadside. They were a little ahead of time.

The moon was now beginning to illuminate the sleeping country and tint the scenery in delicate silvery traceries.

The girls were nervous and began to hope that the train would not come along. They urged Miss Hammond to go home, but she was out for excitement and determined to have it.

Whither it was because the girls saw that she was in earnest or because they were by this time getting accustomed to their peculiar surroundings is a question, but they collected their wits and spiritedly entered into the novel excitement of the whole thing.

Wagers were made among themselves that Miss Hammond could not beat the train, and instantly taken.

Two of the girls were sent along the highway to the terminus of the designated course, to act as judges. The rest of the girls stretched themselves out along the track to do picket duty and witness the fair racer as she sped by.

Presently the faint rumblings of the approaching train was heard. Watches were got out. They pointed to twelve minutes to twelve. The train was on time. The moon was full and the highway was clear.

Now for the start! Miss Hammond mounted her wheel. Two of the girls held her steady. She had pinned up her long skirts so they would not get caught in the wheel.

Her face was set, but she was inwardly terribly excited. She afterward said that each palpatation of her heart felt like the drop of a sledgehammer.

There was a breathless silence for a moment while the train sped up. The headlight flashed upon the group of girls, and the short, sharp screech of the whistle indicated that the engineer's eye had caught the strange spectacle.

In an instant it was beside them.

"Push me off," cried Miss Hammond, and the next moment she was speeding like a huge white sea gull beside the flying train.

How those feet flew round! The wheels, under the nervous, excited push, seemed to take wing, as fence post after fence post was passed.

The light from her lamp appeared like a diamond skimming over the ground, and the lace wrap she had thrown over her shoulders straightened out behind her on the air.

The engineer and the fireman leaned out of the cab window and encouraged her on as the snorts from the panting engine became shorter and quicker.

An eighth of a mile passed, and she was still alongside the engine.

Now she was opposite the cowcatcher. Could she pass it! Faster flew the pedals and she could see she was gaining. She did not feel the pain of her bare feet pressing so hard against the pedals.

Low over the handlebars she bent, in one last supreme effort to pass the engine's flag posts. She could see the girls at the terminus of the course, now only a short way ahead.

Slowly she crept up along the engine, passing the cab, now the driving wheels, then the flag posts, and finally, when the girl judges were only ten feet in front of her she passed the cowcatcher. She had won the race!

Elated with victory, but completely exhausted, Miss Hammond and her companions started to go home, but were met on the road by a brigade from the hotel with lanterns and tin horns.

One of the girls had given away the secret to one of the young men guests, and he had made up a party to quietly watch the race, but they were too late.

Miss Hammond won the bicycle, and also the distinction of being the only lady who has ever raced with a railroad train, to say nothing of her novel riding costume.

The pretty Boston society girl who proved that she could bike as well as read Emerson and quote Ibsen.